

Individuals' demand for skills: barriers and opportunities

Some key issues from a review of evidence and policy

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Structure of this presentation

- 1) Aim of research: review evidence on individual motivation/participation in 'skills development'
- 2) Differences in access to skills: some key research studies using large survey datasets
- 3) Some reflections from an analysis of the LFS
- 4) Individual motivators and barriers to participation
- 5) Evidence on overcoming barriers
- 6) Issues for future research

2) Significant differences in participation in skills development

From a review of analyses of major UK dataset such as BHPS, NCDS, WERS, LFS/APS...

- LFS 2010 – 27% of employees report job-related training in last 13 wks (43% of ‘public sector’ employees)

But LFS/other datasets show significant inequalities...

- *Educational attainment* – basic skills attainment at 11; school leaving attainment; current attainment
- *Labour market status* – higher participation rates among workers rather than unemployed in the UK



2) Significant differences in participation in skills development (cont.)

- *Age* – older workers less likely to participate or be offered training at work
- *Gender and ethnicity* – wide change/variation and change in recent years – women now more likely to train
- Employer factors – higher participation rates among those working in:
 - a) public sector; b) large or multi-site; c) high skilled workplaces
- Unionised workplaces a significant predictor of access to training *controlling for sector*
- Union members more likely to access training

3) Reflecting on an analysis of LFS 2007

- Quarterly snapshot: sample of 43,300 individuals
- Women reporting higher rates than men (34%-30%)
- Ordered probit results on work-related training:
 - Older men significantly disadvantaged, no sig. difference for women
 - Most significant disadvantage related to: those with *absolutely no* qualifications; those in the *lowest* skilled occupations
 - Temporary workers less likely to have trained; more likely to have ‘never been offered’ training
 - Public sector workers and union members more likely to train



4) Motivators and barriers – intrinsic

- SQA (2008) survey highlights importance of relevance of training to workplace as motivator
- LSC (2008) research suggests upgrading skills for job satisfaction/performance often a driver
- Motivation linked to ‘expectancy’ of improved skills that can be used for progression (‘instrumentality’)
- But work context (support of peers/managers); job characteristics; access to resources also crucial



4) Motivators and barriers – intrinsic (cont.)

- Low confidence/self-efficacy among ‘non-learners’
- Negative ‘educational inheritance’ can lead some to look for ‘learning free’ work environments
- Stigma/practical barriers around basic skills gaps
- Life stage (age; job) – may feel ‘no need to learn’
- Lower skilled workers often reluctant/unlikely to consider personal or career benefits of learning
- *But often linked to extrinsic barriers...*



4) Motivators and barriers – extrinsic

- Work-time pressures; family-time pressures; both
- These pressures often explain 'lack of motivation'
- Gaps in relevant, high quality, accessible provision
- *Employer context*: resources, space, environment; learning culture and support of managers/peers
- Role of line managers in rationing opportunities
- Who pays for training and time off?

5) Evidence on overcoming barriers

- Skills provision needs to be relevant and credible in eyes of individuals – the benefits must be clear
- Provision needs to be in form, format, location that facilitates engagement (from in-work to e-learning)
- Provision needs to be sensitive to basic skills gaps
- Qualifications are not always the answer, but some evidence of benefits of clear progression routes
- ... and qualifications that offer a financial return



5) Evidence on overcoming barriers (cont.)

- Need committed employers – communicate immediate value and broader ‘cultural’ benefits
- Need committed line managers promoting culture of learning and allowing time off on basis of need
- Unions’ role in facilitating, encouraging, bargaining
- Structural issues: coping with cost and accessibility

6) Key issues/further research

- ‘Individual’ factors cannot be isolated – motivation often reflects structural/workplace issues
- Need research on decision-making and motivation: how do extrinsic and intrinsic factors combine?
- Quantifying individuals’ preferences on skills
- Need to assess quality of skills provision – some skills offer little progression or wage premium